



the ten green bottles of Colesberg®





An Arkwork collective production

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## A collaborative performing installation

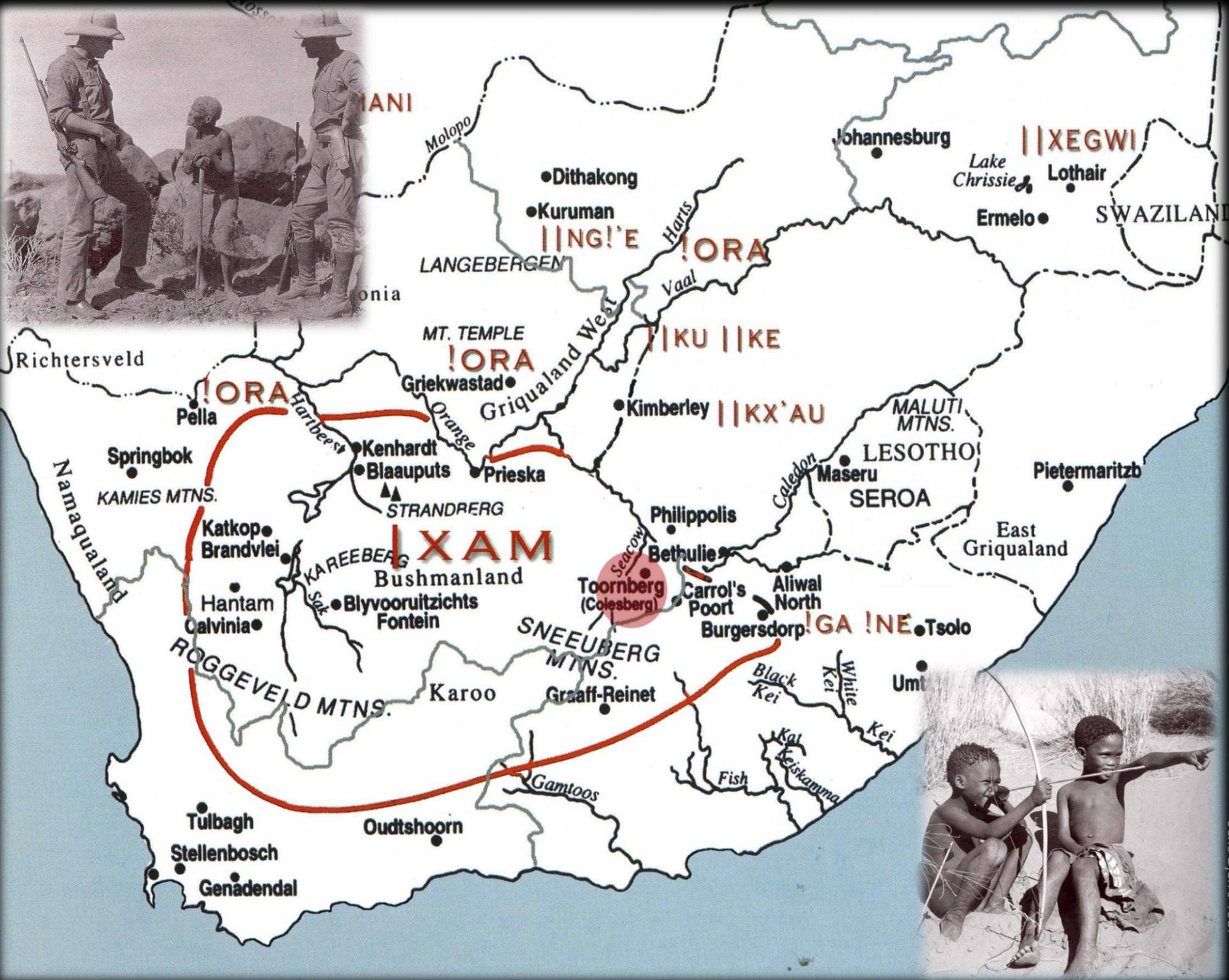
*The ten green bottles of Colesberg* is a performing installation conceived through the relationship between the informal waste collectors of Colesberg and artists from the Arkwork collective. It is a translation of historical San narratives through the lives of the most vulnerable contemporary descendants of the San. It highlights the deep chasm between history and modern day, and then subtly pulls history into the present, through revealing the living magic and stories of transcendence and transformation found in the dump doldrums of the discarded town of Colesberg of the Eastern Cape.



Courtesy Tanya Jordaan 2008

## Colesberg's informal waste collectors

Many of the people who source their livelihoods from what they can find on the Colesberg municipal dump can trace their heritage to the !Xam Bushmen, one of the most ancient surviving cultures of Africa. !Xam history reads as a tragedy of dispossession, alienation, loss, betrayal and neglect. However the !Xam themselves and their stories swell with light and inspiration. Much of this old !Xam knowledge has great relevance to contemporary South Africans. While a thin thread now links the San of today and to those of yesterday, there are still signs of this thread found in the most unexpected places, such as Colesberg's municipal dumpsite



Adapted map from Skotnes 2007

# The San's perceptions of waste

Traditionally the San people did not know of waste, as everything was used to its fullest potential, before finally being reabsorbed by the earth. However these ancient perceptions have obviously evolved and the discarded objects and places of the modern world now play a delicate and complex role in their descendant's lives. The San tradition of respecting the sacred nature of objects is explored in *the ten green bottles of Colesberg*. The performance and installation explores this through a variety of media sources.

*“ The San person, when God created him, it was to work as a waste material in the world. Every man who enters gives a rule that the San people cannot be rich, they must just be there as rubbish ”*

Hans/ Ju\`ho ansi 1997



Courtesy Mary Ann Orr 2008



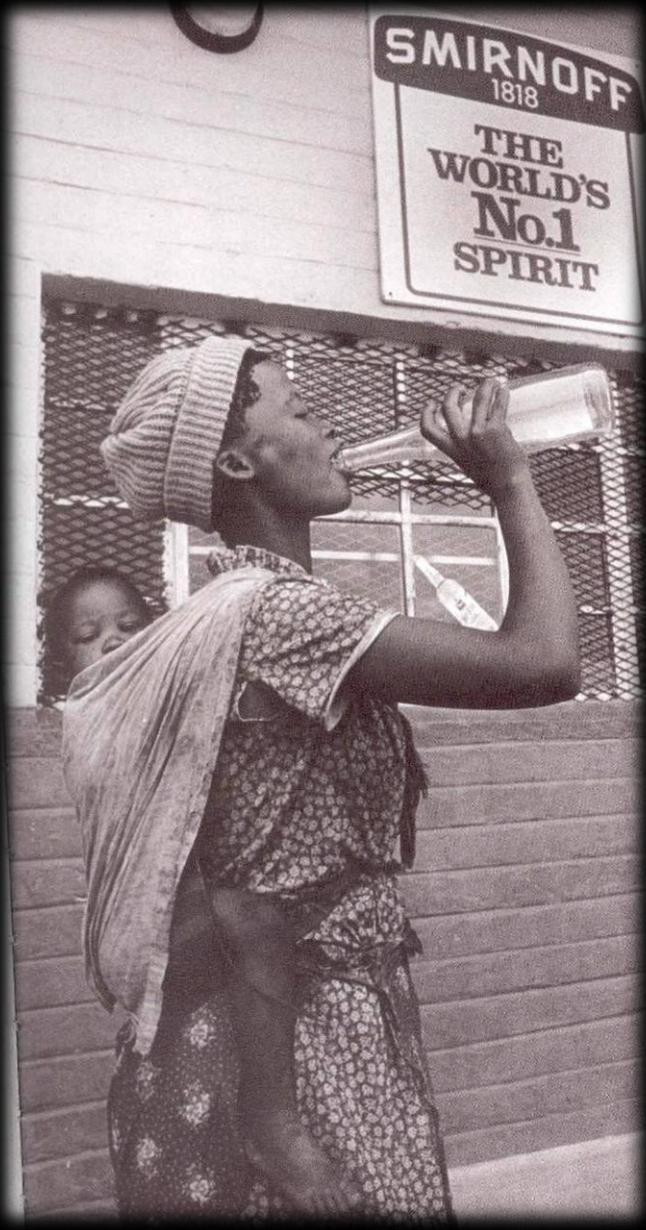
Courtesy Mary Ann Orr 2008

# Heritage and alcoholism

The !Xam, as with other San tribes and aboriginal people's around the world, suffer from severe poverty, alcoholism and drug abuse. The ten green bottle theme in the installation/performance represent the influence alcohol has had in the recent history of the San people and in the current lives of the !Xam descendants.

*“ the biggest problem we have with mixing with other groups is that we, the San, are losing our human dignity... this thing of alcohol and dagga, that is what takes it away ”*

Willem Swarts (#Khomani) 2004



Courtesy Paul Weinberg/South Photographs



Courtesy Paul Weinberg/South Photographs



Courtesy Tanya Jordaan 2008

*“Good morning” she said, “good morning my arse!” I laughed but she said “I am not laughing” The next moment she said, ‘I am taking my pills today, I am drinking wine!’*

Anna-Radht Witbooi (#Khomani) 2004



Stills from the ten green bottles performance, courtesy Tanya Jordan 2008



*“ People do not kill a white springbuck, but merely look at it; for they know that the springbuck would disappear altogether... the people say that the white springbuck resembles the milky way ”*

*!han ≠ kass'o 1878*



Stills from the ten green bottles performance, courtesy Tanya Jordan 2008



*“ The cock ostritch is the one who comes to life again. !Xam call him ‘≠Kabbi-sin’ ... he comes to live where he lived before. He lies there hardening himself. ”*

*!han ≠ kass’o 1879*



Stills from the ten green bottles performance, courtesy Tanya Jordan 2008



## Working with discards

The discarded environment in which the poorest people of Colesberg gain sustenance and livelihoods bitterly reflects the discarded reality of their culture and history. The Arkwork collective engages with the central theme of discarded culture, communities, individuals, and objects by creating a multimedia installation and performance that uses waste objects, images and sounds collected from the Colesberg dump. *The ten green bottles of Colesberg* is in a constant state of flux, and is continuously evolving new intricacies and nuanced narratives.



.courtesy Mary Ann Orr 2008

# The Arkwork Collective: Background

Arkwork is non-profit organization (Section 21). It represents a collaboration of contemporary artists, in the visual, dramatic, and musical arts. The collaboration draws from a unified interest in creating holistic artistic experiences with marginalised communities. Arkwork strives to create experiences for people to turn lost space into empowered place. We believe that when people begin to interact with their heritage and engage with their history and their present, they can develop informed, empowered and collective decisions in creating their future. Arkwork uses arts based intervention as a form of social justice, catharsis, education and personal empowerment. Arkwork's intervention programs involve people living on the edge of contemporary society; the majority of the people we work with are either informal waste collectors or street children.



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# Current Collaborators

- **Mary-Ann Orr** (Dip. Fine Art) is a visual artist and founder of the Arkwork collective. She has recently been selected by Bonhams London as one of five South African artists to exhibit in the Bonhams Contemporary African Art auction this year (2009). She has a particular interest in San mythology and in her work she bridges ancient and modern by sensitively translating San heritage into works that speak to a modern South African audience.
- **Dylan McGarry** (M.S.c Sustainable Rural Development) Arkwork's director is an environmental anthropologist and artist with particular expertise in the socio-economic and bio-physical impacts of HIV/AIDS on vulnerable communities. He is currently working on his PhD (Rhodes University) which investigates the value of arts-based enquiry into the life histories of vulnerable people whose livelihoods are based in municipal dumps of the Eastern Cape.
- **Tanya Jordaan** (Hons. Fine Art, Dip. Heritage) collectively managed Keiskamma Trust, which created the Keiskamma alter-piece which was a monument dedicated to the grandmothers and grandchildren affected and infected by the AIDS epidemic, in Hamburg, Eastern Cape. Tanya is also an artist with particular expertise in community based heritage development.
- **Franscius Le Roux** (classically trained South African **cellist**, composer and facilitator) Is an internationally acclaimed musician and composer, who has particular interest in site-based spontaneous music composition. He travels with his mobile studio and so far has covered 80 000km across four continents touring on the road. He has produced 700 pieces and 60 albums since 2000.

- **Chuma Sopotela** (Dip.Theatre) is an award winning South African performance artist and dancer. Her most recent achievements include winner of both the Spier Contemporary Arts Festival 2007 and Fleur du Cap Best Actress of the Year 2008. Her evocative performances have made her one of the most promising contemporary artists in South Africa.
- **John Cartwright** (Hons. English language and literature. PhD. Medieval studies) has over 40 years of experience as an academic, activist and actor. He has completed a rich variety of publications and performances to date. More recently John has explored performance art and dance. John strikes a magnificent balance between wise maturity and youthful exuberance in his performances.
- **Jaqueline Dommissé** is a multi-tasking theatre person, trained at WITS, who has worked as a director, actor, improviser, puppeteer, teacher and stage manager. She facilitates courses in drama, puppetry and masking. Jaqueline is involved in community theatre and the training of aspirant South African theatre practitioners from economically disadvantaged areas and served for some time as the performing arts manager at The Arts and Media Access Centre, a longstanding NGO with a history of resistance theatre. She is currently the Development Director of *Hearts & Eyes Theatre Collective*



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